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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL, 1935

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
OFFICE OF DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL,
Washington, D. C., September 18, 1935.

HON. HENRY A. WALLACE,
Secretary of Agriculture.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: Herewith I submit a report of the work in the Office of Personnel for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1935.

Sincerely yours,

W. W. STOCKBERGER, *Director.*

INTRODUCTION

The large additions to the personnel of the Department resulting from emergency activities, and the consequent increase in the volume and complexity of financial and budgetary transactions led to the establishment, at the close of the fiscal year 1934, of two coordinate agencies, the Office of Personnel and the Office of Budget and Finance, in lieu of the former Office of Personnel and Business Administration. This action, which brought the organization of the personnel work of the Department into line with modern views on personnel management, has made it possible to give more consideration to the development of morale and the improvement of human relations within the service.

TRAINING IN PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Responsive to numerous requests from employees for training in personnel work, an experimental course of 10 lectures on the Elements of Personnel Administration, was offered as a part of the educational program of the Graduate School of the Department. The lecturers included outstanding representatives of the field of industrial personnel as well as Government officials. Registrants for the course which was open to all Government employees in Washington numbered 766, of whom 381 were employees of the Department of Agriculture.

In the development of a new organization or the rapid expansion of an existing one, effective operation is often retarded by inability to secure adequately trained personnel. The effectiveness with which an organization can absorb the shock of a sudden, large expansion in personnel depends upon the extent to which the men who are second or third in line have received training in the basic principles of administration in the positions next above their own in responsibility. It is therefore recommended that training in administration and in personnel management be made a part of the permanent program of the Department.

POST-ENTRY TRAINING

A short period of intensive "training on the job" would yield large dividends especially from employees whose work, to be effective, must produce comparable results, such as estimators, inspectors, cotton classers, and grain graders. In some of our bureaus, notably in the Forest Service and in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, training programs have been in effect for several years, and the increased effectiveness of the work performed by employees who completed the courses points the way to effect further improvement in the service.

At present we have no recognized procedure for fully acquainting new appointees in the lower grades with the duties they may be called upon to perform. Stenographers, for example, may be assigned to a supervisor who will see that they receive instruction in the objectives of the work, in the organization of the bureau in which they are assigned, and in the minutia of office procedure, or they may be placed at a desk and left to acquire the necessary information as best they can. Provision should be made for an orientation course for such new

appointees. Two hours a week for a period of from 4 to 6 weeks devoted to intensive training should suffice to prepare new appointees for effective service.

Opportunity for advanced training should be provided for older employees, some of whom, after years of service, find themselves in blind-alley jobs, or discover that they are not fitted for the work to which they are assigned. For such employees our system of assignment should be expanded and made more flexible in order to provide more employees with the job for which they are best fitted and which carries with it an opportunity for advancement. Such a procedure, it is believed, will materially decrease the so-called "personnel" problems in many of the bureaus.

APPOINTMENTS, SEPARATIONS, AND PROMOTIONS

On June 30, 1935, there were 44,080 persons under appointment in the Department, as compared with 38,623 at the close of the fiscal year 1934, an increase of 5,457 employees. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration increased its force from 5,152 to 6,136 during the fiscal year, a net gain of 984 employees. The emergency appropriations from the Public Works Administration and for the emergency conservation work were continued through the year. On March 25, 1935, the Soil Conservation Service with its 1,272 employees was transferred from the Department of the Interior to this Department, and by June 30, 1935, the number of employees in that Service had increased to 1,853. On June 1, 1935, 1,670 employees of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration were transferred to the Resettlement Administration. Personnel data for the last 5 years are shown in table 1.

TABLE 1.—*Personnel activities of the Department of Agriculture, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, and 1935*

Year ended June 30—	Employees on rolls of Department			Field stations	Employees appointed	Separations from the Department
	Departmental service	Field service	Total			
1931.....	5,639	22,524	28,163	1,451	10,258	7,836
1932.....	5,664	¹ 21,764	27,428	1,451	6,612	7,425
1933.....	5,521	² 21,023	26,544	1,451	3,915	4,721
1934.....	10,032	³ 28,591	38,623	1,451	⁴ 31,434	⁵ 19,355
1935.....	11,437	⁶ 32,643	44,080	1,864	⁷ 29,092	⁸ 23,635

¹ Includes 78 in Foreign Service.

² Includes 80 in Foreign Service.

³ Includes 11,667 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

⁴ Includes 6,647 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

⁵ Includes 52 in Foreign Service.

⁶ Includes 8,249 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

⁷ Includes 7,456 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

On June 30, 1935, there were 1,072 collaborators serving without compensation, who are not included in the above figures. The largest number of employees in the Department during the World War period was 25,239 on July 1, 1918. The present force of 44,080 shows a gain over that period of 18,841 employees, or 75 percent.

The turn-over of permanent employees during the year was 7.19 percent, as compared with 10.63 percent during the fiscal year 1934; 3.88 percent during 1933; 5.98 percent during 1932; and 7.95 percent during 1931. The apparent decrease in the turn-over during the year as compared with 1934 is accounted for by the fact that during the fiscal year 1934 employees appointed regularly from civil-service certificates for a probationary period for the duration of the work were counted as permanent in 1934, whereas during 1935 they were counted as temporary or emergency employees.

The number of persons appointed during the year was 29,092, and the number separated 23,635, as compared with 31,434 appointments and 19,355 separations during 1934. In both of these years, owing to the establishment of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and other emergency offices, there was an abnormally large number of appointments and separations as compared with previous years.

The number of persons promoted during the year was 3,764, as compared to 914 promoted during 1934. Of this number, 1,470 were in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The so-called "administrative promotions", i. e., promotions within the grade, were still prohibited during the year by the Economy Act of June 30, 1932. These promotions are accounted for principally by changes of assignments incident to filling vacancies in the higher grades.

Under a requirement of the Economy Act authority was obtained from the President to fill 6,024 positions in the Department of Agriculture during the year.

During the year 410 formal applications for civil-service positions were received and circulated throughout the Department, as compared with 254 during 1934.

RECORD OF LEAVE

During the calendar year 1933, the legislative furlough was in effect until March 31, 1933. Beginning April 1, annual leave was restored at the rate of 15 days per annum. As annual leave was not allowed for the full year, no statistics were compiled. However, statistics for sick leave for the calendar year 1933 have been compiled. As indicated in last year's report the decrease of the amount of annual leave to 15 days did not materially affect the amount of sick leave taken by the employees of the Department. In fact, during the calendar year 1933 the amount of sick leave taken by employees in Washington was slightly less than the 8-year average, the average for 1933 being 7.3 days, whereas the 8-year average was 7.5 days.

In the field where the limit of sick leave was 15 days, the average sick leave taken during the year 1933 was also less than the 8-year average, being 2.7 days for 1933, while the 8-year average ended with December 31, 1933, was 3 days.

Though it is commonly reported that Government employees in Washington take 30 days sick leave each year, the records show that during the calendar year 1933 only 4.9 percent of the employees in Washington took the maximum amount, while 27 percent of the employees did not take any sick leave. In the field for the calendar year 1933 only 4.5 percent took the maximum amount, and 50 percent took none. The 8-year average of employees taking the full amount of sick leave is 5.5 percent for Washington and 6.4 percent for the field, while 27 percent of the employees in Washington and 52 percent of the field force used no sick leave.

WORK INCIDENT TO APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS, AND PROMOTIONS

Personnel changes in the Department necessitated contacts with the Civil Service Commission, and certificates and authorizations were obtained as indicated in table 2.

TABLE 2.—*Personnel changes in the Department of Agriculture, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, and 1935*

Item	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
Certificates from register.....	1,420	702	74	1,510	1,648
Reinstatement certificates.....	385	212	27	481	416
Certificates for change in status.....	619	194	108	254	910
Transfer certificates.....	289	165	69	465	220
Authorities for temporary appointments.....	762	462	94	4,848	740
Authorities for extensions of temporary appointments.....	432	443	66	4,031	1,466
Authorities for extensions of suspensions.....	11	6	6	3	2
Civil-service examinations requested.....	132	26	7	29	110

RETIREMENT RECORDS

During the past year 205 employees were retired in accordance with the Retirement Act.

Figures showing retirements for the past 5 years are shown in table 3, and the average annuities paid in the various groups are shown in table 4.

TABLE 3.—*Number of employees retired, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, and 1935*

Year ended June 30—	Annuity retirements in class				Disability retirements in class				Cases disposed of
	Professional	Sub-professional	Clerical, administrative, and fiscal	Custodial	Professional	Sub-professional	Clerical, administrative, and fiscal	Custodial	
1931.....	36	88	20	27	7	17	20	3	1 218
1932.....	22	41	13	9	8	17	8	10	1 128
1933.....	81	132	22	28	9	23	19	15	329
1934.....	51	63	58	24	12	12	28	11	259
1935.....	46	65	24	12	10	14	29	5	205

¹ Corrected figure.

TABLE 4.—*Averages of the annuities in the various groups, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, and 1935*

Group	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
Professional and scientific.....	\$1,006.77	\$1,100.77	\$1,114.04	\$1,102.22	\$1,039.81
Subprofessional.....	926.61	972.67	1,012.91	946.81	960.08
Clerical, administrative, and fiscal.....	907.88	981.88	963.67	946.83	826.35
Custodial.....	749.42	698.57	695.98	757.72	728.50

Since the requirement in section 204 of the Economy Act that exemptions from compulsory retirement must be approved by the President, extensions in the service upon reaching the age for retirement were limited to one associate economic geologist in the Bureau of Public Roads, who received a continuance in the service for 1 year. A senior pathologist in the Bureau of Plant Industry, and a principal soil scientist in the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, who were granted continuances in the service in previous years, were granted further extensions for 1 year during the fiscal year.

In addition to the above, the retirement section forwarded to the Civil Service Commission 1,188 applications for refund of retirement deductions, 85 applications for accumulated deductions (death claims), and 1,442 of the Civil Service Commission Master Retirement Record Card No. 2806 for employees who resigned, transferred to other establishments, or separated for other reasons.

There were 183 employees who obtained credit for past temporary or excepted service as provided for under section 9 of the act of May 29, 1930, and redeposited the amounts previously refunded.

There should be established as soon as practicable a follow-up system on probationers. Under the procedure now in effect a person appointed in the professional service from a civil-service certificate serves a probationary period of 1 year. In the clerical, administrative and fiscal, the subprofessional, and the custodial services the period of probation is 6 months. The existing requirement is a report from the chief of the bureau 1 month before the expiration of the probationary period, certifying to the probationer's service during the period of 11 or 5 months, respectively. If the report is satisfactory, he is retained; but if unsatisfactory, he must be transferred to another assignment or separated from the service. If administrative officers were required at frequent intervals to scrutinize and report upon the probationer's efficiency and fitness for the service, the single and too frequently perfunctory report would be replaced by a definite determination of ability to do the work required.

INVESTIGATIONS

An unpleasant but necessary part of personnel administration is the investigation of cases involving irregularities or misconduct on the part of employees. This task is assigned to a chief investigator who with assistants conducts investigations both in Washington and the field, and upon request of the bureaus also investigates cases of alleged violations of the various regulatory laws which are administered by the Department; makes periodical inspections of field offices;

reviews and analyzes reports containing recommendations for disciplinary action submitted by the various bureaus; prepares for the consideration or signature of the Secretary, briefs of such cases, letters of charges, decisions, reprimands, and correspondence relative thereto, and reviews such correspondence when prepared in the bureaus.

CLASSIFICATION OF POSITIONS

During the fiscal year the work of classification, required by the Classification Act of 1923, as amended, nearly equaled in volume that of the previous year. The continuation of emergency allotments, the transfer of the Soil Conservation Service from the Department of the Interior, and the reorganization of certain lines of work in the various bureaus have occasioned a large part of the classification work required.

A summary of this activity, insofar as it relates to the personnel in Washington, for the past 5 years is given in table 5.

TABLE 5.—*Appointments and changes in status of employees of the Department of Agriculture, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, and 1935*

Year ended June 30—	Appoint- ments to new positions	Changes in duties	Changes to vacancies	Appeals	Total
1931.....	545	430	979	110	2,064
1932.....	187	320	725	23	1,255
1933.....	246	143	104	5	498
1934.....	5,561	1,274	2,329	15	9,179
1935.....	1,634	3,315	3,260	45	8,254

In addition to the above, and in anticipation of the time when classification may be extended to the field service, tentative classifications of all permanent, new positions created in the field were reviewed and aligned with departmental standards; also thousands of positions of employees who were paid from emergency funds were classified in accordance with the requirements of Executive Order No. 6746, dated June 1, 1934.

Charts showing the organization of the various bureaus and offices in the Department were prepared at the request of the Emergency Council, at which time standardization was effected in the terminology of the administrative subdivisions within the bureaus, and a revision begun of obsolete descriptions of work, which is still in progress.

EMPLOYEE ACTIVITIES

The Office of Personnel has sponsored the establishment of various welfare and recreational activities, and has encouraged the voluntary formation of groups of employees with a view to working out cooperative plans for their mutual advantage and satisfaction. Some outstanding examples of these activities are:

The Welfare Association, a self-sustaining organization which makes non-interest-bearing loans to employees in need, operates a cafeteria and a store, employs a full-time welfare worker, and contributes to the support of the other activities.

In 1934, 10,783 policies were in force in the group insurance, which represented \$10,927,750 of insurance. Eighty death and disability claims, amounting to \$59,500 were paid during the year. The surplus or reserve fund was \$154,453.

The recently formed Credit Union has 500 members and has outstanding loans to employees in excess of \$12,000.

Over 2,000 employees of the Department are participants in a hospital-service plan, which at a cost of 75 cents a month, provides 21 days of hospital care in any one contract year.

The medical and health committee was formed to investigate the advisability of establishing a cooperative organization to secure medical diagnosis for its members and medical service as well.

The functions of the rent and housing committee are to aid new employees to find satisfactory housing, to investigate the possibility for a cooperative apartment house for employees of the Department, and to organize a community project for the cooperative erection of individual homes at a moderate cost. A site in

Virginia within a few minutes' drive of the Department has been selected, and construction of the first group of homes is under way.

The Musical and Dramatic Guild was formed by employees "interested in music and the drama and desiring to express that interest in good fellowship." The activities of the guild are carried out through three major groups, choral, dramatic, and orchestral. During the year these groups cooperated in 12 presentations, open to employees, at which the total attendance exceeded 4,000.

The Athletic and Recreational Association was formed to promote and foster athletic and recreational activities among our employees. Sections have been formed according to diversity of interest, ranging from aviation and baseball to chess and pitching horseshoes. It is estimated that upwards of 2,000 employees are active participants in the various activities of the association.

